

Contact: Tom Cook 406-444-1645 Release: Receipt

## SOCIETY CELEBRATES SMITHSONIAN AFFILIATION WEEKLONG

The Montana Historical Society will celebrate its new affiliation with the Smithsonian Institution with a week-long series of special events the week of Feb. 9 through Feb. 16.

The Society has become the 156th Smithsonian affiliate nationwide, which gives it and its members special access to Smithsonian collections and resources as well as programs and expertise, Society Director Richard Sims said. There are more than 8,000 museums in the nation.

"We are honored to have this special relationship with the Smithsonian," Sims said. "This connects what we believe is the premiere historical society in the West with one of the greatest historical institutions in the world."

To celebrate that relationship the Society has organized "Joining Hands with the Nation's Museum: A Celebration of Montana Art and Culture." Admission to Montana's Museum will be free throughout the week.

The highlight of the week will be on Friday (Feb. 15) at 1 p.m. when Harold Closter, director of Smithsonian Affiliations, will officially welcome the Society to its national network of partners.

At noon that day, historian Ken Robison will present "The Ozark Club of Great Falls" which stems from recent Society research into the African-American history of Montana.

Nationally known Native American historian and museum professional George Horse Capture, who has worked for the Smithsonian and is currently a member of the

Society's Board of Trustees, will present the blessing at the 1 p.m. public press conference. Gov. Brian Schweitzer's Deputy Chief of Staff Sheena Wilson will be a special guest speaker at the event.

Refreshments will be served after the event, and the Society's award-winning DVD history series "Montana Mosaic" and other educational outreach material will be on display.

Other special events at the Society (just east of the Capitol building in Helena) scheduled for the week include:

Saturday (Feb. 9) from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., "Charlie, Chocolate and Coffee" – Charlie Russell expert and Society Curator Emeritus Bob Morgan and Friends of the Montana Historical Society Docent and Russell specialist Jim Greene will be in the Society's Mackay Gallery of C.M. Russell Art to talk about the collection. Author Kathe Le Sage will be in the Society Lobby signing copies of her new book "One Woman's Montana." Those who attend can sample the Society's new exclusive coffees, "Bronc to Breakfast" and "Keeoma" that are available at the Museum Store. Free chocolate treats also will be available.

Tuesday (Feb. 12), at noon, "A Century under the Copper Dome: The Montana Legislature from Past to Present" – Veteran Capitol reporter Chuck Johnson will present a special program on the lawmakers who helped shape Montana's history.

Thursday (Feb. 14) from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., "From the Heart: Heritage Quilt Registration" – Quilting experts and Society staff will help people document heirloom and contemporary quilts. They will help identify patterns, dates and materials of quilts

brought in by the public and photograph them for submission to the Montana Quilt Registry kept in the Society's archives.

Friday (Feb. 15) beginning at noon, official declaration of Society affiliation with the Smithsonian and other events.

Saturday (Feb. 16) from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., "Cowboy Coffee and Biscuits, Native American Games, Barns and Dancing" – Society Director Richard Sims will serve up "Campfire Coffee" brewed on an outdoor fire outside the Society, using the Society's new custom coffees, and cook his "famous" Dutch oven biscuits. Hot Chocolate also will be available. From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. a variety of hands-on activities for children will be offered in the museum. Also at 11 a.m. Native American games expert Deanna Leader of Great Falls will talk about those traditions, and Society Curator of Ethnology George Oberst will demonstrate and invite people to participate in the Native American game of "Snow Snakes," which involves sliding shaped and smoothed wooden sticks as far as possible down a snow trough. The event will be on the Capitol grounds dependent on amount of snow. Tribal members and Wakina Sky Indian Youth Program students have been invited to compete for prizes as part of the demonstration. At noon, the Tiernan Irish Dancers of Helena will perform dances based on Irish traditions. At 2 p.m. Christine Brown of the Montana Preservation Alliance and Society photographer Tom Ferris will present "Montana's Last Best Barns: A Pictorial History" based on a forthcoming book of the same name by the Montana Preservation Alliance to be published by the Society Press. This also relates to a similar national program by the Smithsonian.